DESIGN TIPS FOR CREATING VISUAL CONTENT

Whether it’s a flyer, web banner, or social media post, eye-catching visual design is a powerful and effective form of communication. Following a few simple but essential design principles can greatly improve your skills and the quality of your content.

1. White Space: *Room to Breathe*

White or negative space refers to the clear spaces around or between visual elements in a design. Resist the urge to fill every inch of space with text, images, or other design elements, leaving no place for the eye to rest. Use wider margins around the edges of the design and expand the space between unrelated elements.

2. Fonts: *Balance Readability with Style*

Since the fundamental purpose of type is to communicate information, highly stylized, hard-to-read fonts should be used with caution. An easy way to create balance is to use stylized fonts for large headlines and keep body text more readable with minimal, traditional fonts (generally sans serif) and stick with a maximum of two to three fonts to maintain a cohesive design.

3. Color: *Accessibility is Critical*

Besides grabbing your attention, colors also convey emotion and can evoke certain reactions that can positively or negatively influence a viewer’s perception of a design. More importantly, if a color combination makes your design difficult to read—especially for someone with color-blindness—it will create a frustrating experience and make your piece less effective. Use simple, high contrast color schemes to add visual interest and, more importantly, to direct the viewer’s eye toward key information, like headlines, icons, or data points. The Office of Accessible Technology and Services (OATS) works with staff, faculty, students, administrators, and community members to ensure that Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and CSU ATI standards are met in all aspects of the University. You can submit your document for accessibility review at www.csuchico.edu/oats.

4. Resolution: *Print Quality vs. Screen Quality*

To ensure that your design looks professional on screen or in print, it’s important to make sure your file is correctly formatted for production. If you are designing a full-color brochure that will be printed, the photos, images, and logos that you use must be high resolution—a minimum of 300 PPI—or vectored artwork. Avoid using images copied from the internet, as they are typically low resolution—72 DPI—and will look jagged or blurry when printed.

Campus Resources

University Communications offers editing and design services free of charge to all colleges and departments. You can reach UComm at 530-898-4143 or ucomm@csuchico.edu.

University photographers work directly with academic departments and administrative offices to create photographs, including professional portraits, for a variety of needs. Contact the photography studio at 530-898-6114, or email jhalley@csuchico.edu to set up a photo session.

The Visual Identity Guide was created to help bring consistency to the way we all communicate about Chico State. The full guide is available online at www.csuchico.edu/style-guide/visual.